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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6137  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 001277

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [UNSC](#) [ENRG](#) [LE](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: LEBANESE REACTION TO ISRAELI SETTLEMENT MORATORIUM

REF: SECSTATE 122214

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Thomas F. Daughton for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Presidential advisor Naji Abi Assi welcomed details about Israel's recently announced settlement moratorium and the U.S. reaction to it. Abi Assi also told Charge on December 1 that Palestinian Authority President Abu Mazen was scheduled to visit Beirut on December 7. He opined that Abu Mazen had not made a final decision about seeking re-election. Closer to home, Abi Assi called Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee Director Ambassador Khalil Makkawi's recent resignation premature and said it had not yet been accepted. He said it was too early to be certain that one of the ministers of state without portfolio could officially take the lead on Palestinian issues, as Prime Minister Hariri desires. End summary.

ABU MAZEN IN BEIRUT DECEMBER 7  
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12. (C) Charge delivered reftel demarche to Naji Abi Assi, diplomatic advisor to Lebanese President Michel Sleiman, on December 1. Abi Assi stated that he was unfamiliar with the details of the Israeli decision to unilaterally halt settlement construction and expansion for ten months and appreciated the additional background information. Charge noted that the Israeli decision was a positive step, but still fell short of U.S. expectations. Abi Assi took careful note of the U.S. reaction to the Israeli announcement.

13. (C) Abi Assi reported that Abu Mazen was scheduled to visit Beirut on December 7. Commenting on the seriousness of Abu Mazen's stated intention not to run for re-election, Abi Assi said he did not believe the decision was final. He characterized the PA president as "still open-minded to another term." While he agreed that Abu Mazen's government was the most "transparent" in the PA's history, Abi Assi cautioned that the uncertainties of conducting the election in Gaza made predictions on possible candidates and outcomes difficult. (Note: December 4 press stories sourced to the presidential palace reported that Abu Mazen is coming to Beirut for a "short visit" on December 7 to discuss the Middle East peace process and the status of Palestinians in Lebanon. End note.)

RESIGNATION OF MAKKAWI WAS  
PREMATURE, NOT YET ACCEPTED  
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14. (C) Turning to Lebanese interests in the Palestinian issue, Abi Assi assessed that the recent resignation of Ambassador Khalil Makkawi as director of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) was premature. The reported appointment by Prime Minister Hariri of

Minister of State (without portfolio) Wael Abou Faour to take the lead on the Palestinian portfolio was not yet official, he clarified. Abi Assi said Makkawi had been surprised by the announcement and had abruptly submitted his resignation in response, but the resignation had not yet been accepted by PM Hariri. On the question of naming a minister of state to handle the issue, Abi Assi explained that the technicalities and legal basis for doing so were not clear and were still being studied. The appointment idea "may not hold up," he analyzed.

DAUGHTON